

TREE TOP RANCHES, LP GRAZING PERMIT TRANSFER/RENEWAL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
OR-025-04-07

Bureau of Land Management
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I. Introduction: Purpose of and Need for Action.....	1
Chapter II. Alternatives Including the Proposed Action	1
A. Description of the Proposed Action.....	1
B. No Grazing Alternative.....	2
Chapter III. Description of the Affected Environment	2
Chapter IV. Environmental Consequences.....	3
A. Proposed Action.....	3
1. Anticipated Impacts	3
2. Cumulative Impacts	3
Chapter V. Persons and Agencies Consulted.....	3
Chapter VI. Participating Staff	3

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Grazing permittees who graze their livestock on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land shall have grazing permits issued to them under the grazing regulations (43 CFR 4130.2(a)). Grazing permits shall be issued for a term of 10 years unless there is some reason which requires a term of less than 10 years under the grazing regulations (43 CFR 4130.2(d)). This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for a transfer rather than using a Categorical Exclusion that would normally be prepared for a transfer. The time remaining on the existing permit is only 1-year and an EA would need to be prepared next year to renew the permit. All resource conditions have been assessed for the allotments under this permit. Based on these factors, it has been decided to go ahead at this time and prepare an EA analyzing the effects of issuing Tree Top Ranches, LP, a grazing permit for a period of 10 years.

The Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP) of 1992, identified land that was available for livestock grazing. The land in the project area of the Dry Lake (#5303), Buck Mountain (#5537), Hunter (#5202), and Catterson (#5203) Allotments, which are within the Tree Top Ranches, LP, grazing permit, meets the criteria set forth in the Three Rivers RMP under GM 1.4, Page 2-37 (refer to Maps A, B, and C). This action is also in conformance with applicable Tribal, State, and County Land Use Plans. (This analysis is tiered to the Three Rivers RMP and incorporates by reference, the information and analysis contained within the RMP.)

An analysis of the grazing system used on the Dry Lake Allotment (#5303), Buck Mountain Allotment (#5537), and Hunter Allotment (#5202) for compliance with the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management were completed in 1999. An analysis of the grazing system used on the Catterson Allotment (#5203) for compliance with the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management was completed in 2003. These allotments are meeting the standards and guidelines under current management practices.

CHAPTER II: ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. Description of the Proposed Action

The proposed action is to issue to a new permittee (Tree Top Ranches, LP) a term livestock grazing permit to graze livestock on public land for a period for 10 years.

The new term permit would be issued with the same terms and conditions as the expiring permit. This would continue the existing grazing management and would be the same as the **No Action Alternative**. Therefore, both alternatives will be analyzed under the proposed action. There has been monitoring of the effects of the current livestock grazing system in place within the allotments for a number of years. Most of the study sites have been read periodically for more than 27 years. Monitoring data collected was last formally analyzed in 1995 for Dry Lake Allotment, in 1995 for Buck Mountain Allotment, in 1996 for Hunter Allotment, and in 2003 for Catterson Allotment. The data analyzed indicates that allotment objectives are currently being met.

B. No Grazing Alternative

The proposed action would continue current terms and conditions. Monitoring has shown that allotment resource objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health are being met. Therefore, while a "No Grazing Alternative" has been considered, for the above reasons this alternative will not be addressed further in this document.

CHAPTER III: DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed in the Three Rivers RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), are not known to be present, or would not be known to be affected by the proposed action or alternative: Prime or Unique Farmlands, Floodplains, Hazardous Materials, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas, Air Quality, Water Quality, Cultural Heritage, American Indian Religious Concerns, Noxious Weeds, Paleontology, Special Status Fauna, and Special Status Flora.

The following critical elements have been recently established and were not addressed in the Three Rivers RMP/EIS:

Migratory Birds: Some migratory birds are known to use the project area for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations.

Environmental Justice: There are no economically disadvantaged or minority populations present within the project area.

Adverse Energy Impacts: There is no known potential for energy resource development within the project area.

The affected environment was discussed thoroughly in the Three Rivers RMP and Final EIS.

CHAPTER IV: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Proposed Action

1. Anticipated Impacts

Grazing use for Tree Top Ranches, LP, would be authorized under a new 10-year term grazing permit. The level and timing of use by livestock in the allotments would not change from what was authorized at the time the Three Rivers RMP was adopted.

- a. Migratory Birds: There would be no known effect on migratory birds by the issuing of a livestock grazing permit.
- b. Environmental Justice: There are no economically disadvantaged or minority populations which would be disproportionately affected by issuance of a livestock grazing permit.
- c. Adverse Energy Impacts: No known adverse effects would occur to energy development, production or distribution as a result of the proposed action of renewing a livestock grazing permit.

2. Cumulative Effects

There are no known cumulative effects, either positive or negative, that would occur if a grazing permit is issued.

CHAPTER V: PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Tree Top Ranches, LP, Permittee

CHAPTER VI: PARTICIPATING STAFF

Bill Andersen, Range Management Specialist, Lead Preparer
Lindsey Aschim, Fishery Biologist
Gary Foulkes, District Planning/Environmental Coordinator
Terri Geisler, Geologist
Fred McDonald, Recreation
Leslie Richman, Weed Specialist
Fred Taylor, Wildlife Biologist
Nora Taylor, Botanist and Lead Range Management Specialist
Scott Thomas, Archaeologist